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FOR WILCOX

FOL RPT BANGKOK 21854 ACTION SECSTATE INFO USUN NY 03 AUG
QUOTE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: UN, SENV, ESCAP

SUBJECT: UN WATER CONFERENCE: ESCAP REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING -
JULY 27 - AUGUST 2, 1976

REF: STATE 178629

SUMMARY: UNEXCITING TECHNICAL MEETING FOLLOWED CLOSELY DRAFT
REPORT FORMAT PREPARED BY ESCAP SECRETARIAT. (DOC L6).
ONLY INTERESTING EXCHANGES STIMULATED BY BANGLADESH-INDIAN
SQUABBLE OVER FARAKKA BARRAGE DIVERSION OF GANGES RIVER.
PAKISTAN EVENTUALLY SUGGEST BANGLADESH CONSIDER USING ITS
INDUS BASIN AGREEMENT WITH INDIA AS MODEL. SECRETARY GENERAL
MAGEED'S OPENING STATEMENT WAS INFORMATIVE RE DIRECTION HE
HOPES UN WATER CONFERENCE WOULD TAKE. COUNTRY STATEMENTS
INDICATED GENERAL AGREEMENT WATER WAS VITAL ELEMENT FOR ASIAN
DEVELOPMENT BUT NO NEW IDEAS PROPOSED OR DEVELOPED. FINAL
REPORT, WHILE DEVOID OF CONTENTIOUS ISSUES, IS TECHNICALLY
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COMPREHENSIVE BUT PLATITUDINOUS AND UNINSPIRING. END SUMMARYM

1. PARTICIPATION - MEETING WAS MAINLY DIALOGUE AMONG SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES - INDIA, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA AND PAKISTAN. INDONESIA, JAPAN AND MALAYSIA OCCASIONALLY INTERVENED AS DID AUSTRALIA. FOLLOWING COUNTRIES PARTICIPATED: AFGHANISTAN, AUSTRALIAN, BANGLADESH, FRANCE, INDIA, INDONESIA, IRAN, JAPAN, KOREA, LAOS, MALAYSIA, NEPAL, NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, PAKISTAN, PHILIPPINES, SINGAPORE, SRI LANKA, THAILAND, USSR, UK, US AND WESTERN SAMOA. ISRAEL SENT OBSERVER. MAGEED WAS EXTREMELY PLEASED MANY DELEGATIONS LED BY HIGH-LEVEL IRRIGATION OR PUBLIC WORKS OFFICIAL SUCH AS:

BANGLADESH - B.M. ABBAS, PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER ON FLOOD CONTROL AND IRRIGATION

INDIA - C.C. PATEL, ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF IRRIGATION

IRAN - D. HARIRI, CHIEF, INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH AND WATER RESOURCES

SRI LANKA - M. SENANAYAKE, MINISTER OF IRRIGATION, POWER AND HIGHWAYS.

LATTER WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN AND OTHERS VICE CHAIRMEN. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS POUCHED WITH FINAL REPORT AND COUNTRY STATEMENTS TO IO/CMD KAHN.

2. AT END OF MEETING, BANGLADESH REP RAISED QUESTION ABOUT LEVEL OF REPRESENTATION EXPECTED AT BA. MAGEED SAID HE WANTED HIGHEST LEVEL POLICY-ORIENTED OFFICIALS THERE. BANGLADESH ASKED IF PARTICIPANTS COULD EXPECT TRAVEL FINANCING SIMILAR TO THAT FOR CURRENT MEETING. MAGEED ASSURED BANGLADESH REP THERE WERE NO CONSTRAINTS ON ACCOMMODATIONS IN ARGENTINA AND SAID HE EXPECTED TO GET TRAVEL FINANCING FOR DELEGATES FROM UNEP. (HE LATER MODIFIED DRAFT REPORT TO INDICATE ONLY QUOTE SOME UNQUOTE DELEGATES WOULD GET FINANCING). SOUTH ASIANS SHOWED BY THEIR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION THEY EXPECTED TO SEND HIGH LEVEL DELEGATIONS BUT OTHERS WERE NOT SO CLEAR IN THEIR INTENTIONS. (COMMENT: IF FINANCING READILY AVAILABLE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ONE CAN EXPECT FAIRLY FULL REGIONAL PARTICIPATION. KEY IS HOW MUCH DOES UNEP EXPECT TO ALLOCATE FOR TRAVEL. BANGKOK TO BUENOS AIRES IS STILL QUITE A TRIP). WESTERN SAMOA AND SINGAPORE REPS REMAINED BAFFLED BY TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS MOST OF THE TIME. JAPAN AND AUSTRALIA AND OURSELVES STRESSED INTEREST IN QUOTE SAFE WATER UNQUOTE GOALS OF HABITAT CONFERENCE AND THESE WERE INCLUDED VERBATIM IN RECOMMENDATIONS.

3. CONTENTIOUS ISSUES - NONE RAISED GIVEN ANODYNE NATURE OF RECOMMENDATIONS. NO REFERENCES MADE TO NIEO OR CERDS.

4. PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS - NO SPECIAL PRIORITIES GIVEN BUT SINCE MEETING WAS MAINLY A REUNION OF ENGLISH-EDUCATED SOUTH ASIAN IRRIGATION WATER EXPERTS, THE OVERALL REPORT HAD A DECIDEDLY RURAL IRRIGATION CAST. NOBODY REALLY OBJECTED BECAUSE OVER EIGHTY PERCENT OF ESCAP REGION DEVOTED TO AGRICULTURE. THERE WERE 20 RECOMMENDATIONS COVERING FOLLOWING TOPICS: INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, NATIONAL WATER POLICY, PLANNING AND EVALUATION TECHNIQUES, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, WATER LAW AND ADMINISTRATION, RELATION BETWEEN LAND AND WATER MANAGEMENT, BASIC DATA, EFFICIENCY IN REGULATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF WATER, EFFICIENCY IN WATER USE AND WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT (URBAN AND IRRIGATION) ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH MATTERS, RURAL COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLIES (THIS IS VERBATIM HABITAT SAFE WATER RECOMMENDATION), FLOOD LOSS MITIGATION, DROUGHT LOSS MITIGATION, INTERNATIONAL RIVERS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF TECHNOLOGISTS, EDUCATION OF WATER USERS, RESEARCH, RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UN WATER CONFERENCE AND OTHER CONFERENCES AND PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH FINANCE. (THE LATTER READS: A BETTER FLOW OF FUNDS WAS CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS ASSOCIATED WITH WATER RESOURCES PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT).

5. SAFE DRINKING WATER - SEE ABOVE RE INCLUSION VERBATIM HABITAT RECOMMENDATION. ONLY JAPAN, AUSTRALIA AND US PUSHED THIS CONCEPT BUT ALL AGREED SAFE DRINKING WATER WAS GREAT IDEA IN REGION WHERE ONLY TEN PERCENT HAVE IT NOW ACCORDING TO ESCAP SECRETARY GENERAL MARAMIS.

6. NEW REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS - CLOSEST MEETING CAME TO SPECIFIC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROPOSAL WAS WHEN BANGLADESH REP COMPLAINED MILDLY ABOUT CURRENT POOR COORDINATION OF WATER MATTERS IN UN SYSTEM. HE BACKED AWAY QUICKLY WHEN ESCAP SECRETARIAT AND INDIA DECLARED ANOTHER UN AGENCY CONCERNED JUST WITH WATER MIGHT WELL BE WORSE THAN PRESENT RATHER UNCOORDINATED SITUATION. DUTCH DELEGATE (VOLKER) TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT EGYPT INTENDS TO PROPOSE CREATION OF UN WATER FUND (UNWF). WE COULD NOT CONFIRM THIS. OUR GUESS IS THAT IF SPECIAL WATER INSTITUTION PROPOSED, SOME SOUTH ASIANS WOULD JOIN BANDWAGON.

7. FINANCIAL DISCUSSIONS - THERE WAS GENERAL RECOGNITION THAT FINANCING IS HEART OF ALL PROPOSALS BUT NO DISCUSSIONS IN DETAIL TOOK PLACE. SEE LAST RECOMMENDATION PARA FOUR ABOVE. WE IMAGINE THIS ISSUE COULD PICK UP WHEN MORE RADICAL DEVELOPING COUNTRIES GET A CRACK AT UN WATER CONFERENCE.

8. NATIONAL COMMITTEES - NOT MANY HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED. ONLY FOLLOWING INDICATED THEY HAD SUCH ORGANIZATIONS: BANGLADESH, INDIA, INDONESIA, JAPAN, MALAYSIA, PAKISTAN, PHILIPPINES, THAILAND, USSR AND OURSELVES.

9. MAGEED'S VIEWS - HIS VIEWS WERE TESTED ON A DAILY BASIS AND FROM FIRST HE WAS OPTIMISTIC AND UPBEAT. WE SUSPECT THAT HE WOULD MAINTAIN THIS APPEARANCE EVEN IF TOLD TOMORROW THAT BUENOS AIRES CONFERENCE HAD BEEN CANCELLED. ESCAP MEETING DID HIS WORK FOR HIM BECAUSE IT SERVED UP AN ELABORATE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS COVERING ALL ANYONE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT WATER BUT HAD NEVER BOTHERED TO ASK. REPORT IS NOT AREA-ORIENTED; IT COULD APPLY TO ANY DEVELOPING AGRICULTURAL AREA IN THE WORLD. THERE IS NO SPECIAL ASIAN SLANT. MAGEED KEEPS TALKING ABOUT SETTING UP INTERGOVERNMENTAL TASKS FORCES AND PREPARING REPORTS. HE CONSTANTLY USES PHRASE, QUOTE I'M TRYING. UNQUOTE. (ONE OF CONSULTANTS TOLD US THAT LACK OF DOCUMENT PREPARATION IS SCANDALOUS. FOUR PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY WALKED OFF JOB AND CONFERENCE IS LESS THAN NINE MONTHS AWAY. CONFERENCE, INCIDENTALLY, OPENS MARCH 14 INSTEAD OF MARCH 7). MAGEED IS PLEASANT AND PERSONABLE AND LIKES IRRIGATION WATER PEOPLE - BUT HE LEFT WEAK IMPRESSION ON MANY. SOME REPRESENTATIVES MUTTERED THEY ARE MAKING NO RESERVATIONS TO BA UNTIL MORE REGIONAL MEETINGS ARE HELD. IN SHORT, MAGEED MAY HAVE BEEN ONLY OFFICIAL, OUTSIDE OF SOUTH ASIANS, WHO APPRECIATED ESCAP REGIONAL WATER MEETING MANY OTHERS CONSIDERED IT PLATITUDINOUS AND A BORE; LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MOST WERE JUST BAFFLED AND OVERWHELMED BY TECHNICAL JARGON.

10. COMMENT: MEETING COULD HAVE COLLAPSED FROM SHEER BOREDOM IF BANGLADESH HAD NOT ATTEMPTED TO INCLUDE LANGUAGE IN REPORT CRITICIZING INDIA IN GENERAL WAY ABOUT ITS DIVERSION OF WATER TO CALCUTTA FROM FARAKKA DAM ON GANGES, WHICH ALSO FLOWS THROUGH BANGLADESH. THIS IS OLD DISPUTE WHICH BANGLADESH RAISED LATE LAST YEAR IN ESCAP COMMITTEE AND AT 32ND SESSION. INDIA BLOCKED MOST ATTEMPTS AND SUGGESTED RESOLVING DISPUTE BILATERALLY INSTEAD OF MULTILATERALLY. PAKISTAN OFFERED USEFUL MODEL FOR BANGLADESH TO FOLLOW: INDUS BASIN AGREEMENT WITH INDIA WHICH SEEMS TO WORK. ORIGINAL US STANCE OPPOSING UN WATER CONFERENCE STILL SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN WISE POSITION. FROM OBSERVING THIS ESCAP MEETING, UN WATER CONFERENCE APPEARS TO BE ONE BIG BOONDOGGLE FOR INTERNATIONAL IRRIGATION WATER EXPERTS. LIP SERVICE WILL BE GIVEN A QUOTE SAFE WATER UNQUOTE BUT IRRIGATION ISSUES WILL BE CENTER OF ATTENTION. WE RECOMMEND CLOSE SCRUTINY OF UNEP FINANCIAL OFFERS TO LDCS FOR UN WATER CONFERENCE AS USEFUL DAMAGE-LIMITING ACTION. WHITEHOUSE

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